

ExaGrid Selected by New England Law | Boston for Price and Scalability

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

NEW ENGLAND LAW | BOSTON

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Derek Lofstrom
Senior Network Engineer
New England Law | Boston

Key Benefits:

- Deduplication approach reduced backup times from as high as 30 hours down to 12-18 hours
- Tight integration with Symantec Backup Exec OST updates system catalog during replication
- Deduplication ratios as high as 16:1
- Retention increased from two weeks to 16 weeks

Customer Overview

Located in the heart of Boston’s legal community, New England Law | Boston offers an academic program that emphasizes extensive preparation in practical skills, focusing on experiential learning opportunities. Founded in 1908 as Portia Law School, the only law school established exclusively for the education of women, New England Law | Boston has been coeducational since 1938. It was renamed from New England School of Law in 2008.

School Concerned with DR and Capacity Management

New England Law | Boston had concerns about the evolution of its existing backup strategy, which was becoming less than optimal from both a disaster recovery and operational perspective. This, as well as the ability to support increasing service demands led the institution to rethink its practice and investigate a more appropriate strategy.

“We were facing operational limitations with our previous strategy, such as capacity management and lengthy backup times which ran anywhere from 24 to 30 or more hours. Plus we were always limited by disk provisioning constraints which resulted in more complexity, and significant investments in time spent managing backup targets when capacity on any one volume hit a threshold. We knew deduplication technology would give us some quick benefits, but the issues with sizing limitations, processing overhead and certainly DR would still need to be addressed.”

ExaGrid Chosen for Cost and Scalability

After looking at several different solutions, including solutions utilizing EMC Data Domain and VNX systems, the school chose a two-site ExaGrid system with data deduplication because of its tight integration with the school’s existing backup application (Symantec Backup Exec), cost in relation to scalability and feature set, and built-in replication to protect a wide range of data, including

student records, business data, and machine data.

“The ExaGrid system was cost effective and more scalable than the EMC Data Domain product, which for a similar price point limited us in total capacity and required significant labor and planning just to extend us to the next level. We also like ExaGrid’s approach to the deduplication process which focuses on backing up the data as quickly as possible, helping to meet and exceed our backup windows,” Lofstrom said.

Tight integration with Backup Exec also played a part in the decision, he said. “We liked the fact that the ExaGrid system works with OST, so data that is replicated between sites can be updated in the system’s catalog without additional processing and scheduling. This increases our flexibility and makes our recovery processes run more efficiently.”

Backup Times Dramatically Reduced, Improved Retention

Before installing the ExaGrid system, the school had been backing up its data from disk to tape. Now, even though the school has increased its strategy to a disk-to-disk-to-tape process, it has still seen its backup windows reduced from 24 to 30 hours to just 12 to 18 hours on average for a complete weekend backup. The ExaGrid system has been delivering data deduplication ratios as high as 16:1, which has helped to improve retention from two weeks to 16 weeks.

“We’ve essentially expanded and improved our data protection portfolio in a way that also reduces our overhead. We’re keeping more

EXAGRID™

copies of the data for longer periods in a way that traditionally equated to significant time and storage tradeoffs. The gains we've seen in retention help us to be more flexible in terms of what services we can deliver to the business and to our users. For example, we've been asked in the past how much it would cost to keep certain data for longer periods of time, and our answer has always been relative to tape technology and tier 1 disk costs. Now, we can be more flexible in our retention policies, enabling us to deliver on those same requests without additional investment," Lofstrom said.

ExaGrid combines standard compression along with zone-level data deduplication, which stores changes from backup to backup instead of storing full file copies. This unique approach reduces the disk space required by a range of 10:1 to 50:1 or more, delivering unparalleled cost savings and performance. ExaGrid delivers extremely fast backup performance because data is written directly to disk, and data deduplication is performed post process after the data is stored to reduce data. When a second site is used, the cost savings are even greater because ExaGrid's zone-level data deduplication technology moves only the changes from backup to backup, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

Easy Setup, Experienced Customer Support

The ExaGrid system was designed to be easy to set up and maintain, and trained, in-house engineers who are dedicated to individual accounts staff ExaGrid's industry-leading customer support team. The system is fully supported and was designed and manufactured for maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable components.

"The initial installation only took about an hour, and since then, the system has been up and running without issue. I don't have to worry about managing capacity anymore, our dependence on tape has gone down, and I get a daily report with backup summaries and statistical information on system usage and allocations that alerts me to any potential problem," said Lofstrom.

ExaGrid's customer support has also been a highlight for Lofstrom.

"I like that we have an assigned support engineer who knows the product inside and out. With many other vendors, you call in and roll the dice, and oftentimes, you get someone who's been there a week and doesn't know anything about the product. That hasn't been our experience with ExaGrid. The technical support we've received has been incredible."

GRID Architecture Ensures Scalability

ExaGrid uses a GRID-based configuration, where each appliance contains processing power, memory, bandwidth,

and disk. When the system needs to expand, additional appliance nodes are attached to the GRID, bringing with them additional processing power, memory, bandwidth, and disk. This type of configuration allows the system to maintain all the aspects of performance as the amount of data grows, and you are only paying for the amount of processing power, memory and bandwidth as you need it. In addition, as new ExaGrid appliance nodes are added to the GRID, the ExaGrid automatically load balances available capacity, maintaining a virtual pool of storage that is shared across the GRID.

Lofstrom said that he expects New England Law | Boston to eventually scale the ExaGrid system up to handle increasing amounts of data.

"Every year, we're bringing new services online and we're also digitizing a lot of our data so that we can stream more content, which translates into lots more data to back up. With the ExaGrid system, we're confident that we'll be able to meet our backup needs today and into the future without having to perform a forklift upgrade, which we would have to do with some of the other systems we looked at," he said. "The ExaGrid system was a good choice for our environment. It fit seamlessly into our infrastructure and it's worked as promised."

ExaGrid and Symantec Backup Exec

Symantec Backup Exec is the gold standard in Windows data recovery, providing cost-effective, high-performance, and certified disk-to-disk-to-tape backup and recovery—including continuous data protection for Microsoft Exchange, SQL, file servers, and workstations. It also supports single-drive libraries, encryption, and disaster recovery. High-performance agents and options provide fast, flexible, granular protection and recovery, and scalable management of local and remote server backups.

Organizations using Symantec Backup Exec can look to ExaGrid as an alternative to tape for nightly backups. ExaGrid sits behind existing backup applications, such as Symantec Backup Exec, providing faster and more reliable backups and restores. In a network running Symantec Backup Exec, using ExaGrid in place of a tape backup system is as easy as pointing existing backup jobs at a NAS share on the ExaGrid system. Backup jobs are sent directly from the backup application to the ExaGrid for onsite backup to disk.

For more information about ExaGrid, please visit us at www.exagrid.com or call us at 1-800-868-6985.